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ABSTRACT

There is no shortage of surveys on children's and young adults' leisure time reading interests, stretching as far back as 1888 in Great Britain and 1897 in the United States. The most comprehensive research undertaken in Great Britain was a study conducted by the Schools Council, published by Macmillan in 1975 as "Children and Their Books." The study sought to discover the extent, kind, and degree of satisfaction of children's voluntary reading, as well as the environmental factors influencing their choices. More recently, a study of 473 Northern Ireland children was conducted, along the same lines as the Schools Council's study. The subjects were aged 11 through 13 years. The survey indicated that, at the 11-year-old range, girls read more books per month than boys, but no significant difference was found between the two sexes for ages 12 and 13. The age difference showed a progressive increase in nonreaders and a corresponding decrease in heavy readers in both sexes. Girls gave more time to reading than did boys. Children's nonquality fiction was read most often by 11- and 12-year-olds, and adult nonquality by 13-year-olds. The subjects were also asked what advice they would give to an author writing for their age group, and their replies, in order of priority, indicated preferences for excitement, adventure, reality, mystery, and humor. Violence and historical fiction were ranked very low. (HTH)

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"Between the Idea and the Reality ...."

"Between the idea and the reality
Falls the Shadow."

Thus wrote T. S. Eliot in The Hollow Men, a poem which comments on modern man's sterility and emptiness, his "headpiece filled with straw". The question I wish to pose in this paper is whether or not there is a shadow between the high ideals of librarians, with the excellent provision of literature in libraries for young people, and the reality of the indifference, apathy, perhaps even hostility, shown by many of these young people towards books and reading. Are we bringing up a generation of children whose heads are filled with pop and pulp, whose imaginations are underdeveloped and whose sensitivity has been blunted by the crude assaults of twentieth century society? Perhaps so, but as librarians and educators we know it should be otherwise. Listen to George Allen, formerly one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education, with English literature as his discipline:

> "The experience of books is ultimately part of the process of coming to maturity: the maturing process is essentially a personal matter and the boy or girl who can enter into the experience of books is likely to grow into a larger and more complete person. That is why the experience of literature should be central in education and it is for this end that all are working."

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Listen also to William Walsh, in the Preface to his fine book, The Use of Imagination:[1].

> "Of all studies, that of literature is the discipline which most intimately affects the character of a person's self, which most radically and permanently modifies the grain of his being."

There is no shortage of surveys on children's and young people's leisure-time reading interests, stretching back to the earliest study

published in Great Britain in 1888, while in the United States the earliest work in the field appeared in 1897. There was an intensification of interest in the twenties, and in the United States three large surveys were undertaken: by Jordan in 1921 (revised and augmented in 1926), by Terman and Lima in 1925, and by Washburne and Vogel in 1926. The method used in all three was that of asking the children to provide information about their reading and the degree of their enjoyment of it. A weakness of all three studies, and of many later ones, is a dearth of information about the population from which the samples of children were drawn and of details of any sampling techniques which were employed. Another problem which these surveys highlight is the difficulty of obtaining a true report from the children, who tend to supply the answer they think the investigator expects, or the answer their teacher would like them to give, rather than admit to low taste or to no reading at all. Thus when Terman and Lima gave a questionnaire to 1827 school children in grades 1 to 8, asking each child to list the four or five books he or she had most enjoyed reading during the past year the titles were, fairly predictably, for boys, Treasure Island, The Call of the Wild, Tom Sawyer, Robinson Crusoe, and The Three Musketeers, while girls offered Little Women, Anne of Green Gables, Ivanhoe, Little Men and Treasure Island. Not surprisingly the authors deduced from these two lists that boys prefer stories of adventure and mystery, girls prefer stories of school and home life.

Washburne and Vogel's The Winnetka Graded Book List first appeared in 1926, and was later republished as What Children Like to Read. The investigators asked children to fill in what they called a 'ballot' on every book read during the year 1924-25, and this involved ticking one of the following statements:

One of the best books I ever read.
A good book, I like it.
Not so very interesting.
I don't like it.

Over 100,000 ballots were received on some 9300 books, a much larger sample than had previously been investigated, and the judgement of professional children's librarians was used to grade the books in terms of literary merit.

Lazar's study of Reading Interests, Activities and Opportunities of Bright, Average and Dull Children, published in 1937, looks at 4300 children aged 10, 11 and 12 in New York. Account was taken of IQ scores and of socio-economic background, and results showed that the former was more closely related to the number of books read than was the latter, though the latter, as one might expect, correlated highly with the number of books in the home.

In Great Britain the first notable survey was carried out by Jenkinson in 1938, with the results published in 1940 under the title What do Boys and Girls Read? This was a sizeable survey, with a questionnaire being answered by nearly 3000 children, 1570 boys and 1330 girls, and the pupils were asked to name all the books, with the exception of those studied as set texts in school, which they had read in the past month, and to place each title into one of seven stipulated categories. There were also questions about newspaper and magazine reading, poetry, plays and cinema-going. Jenkinson's book gives a detailed break-down of his results, but briefly his findings are as follows:

Adventure stories were most popular with boys of all the age levels (12-15). Girls give more time to stories about home life and to school stories, with an increasing interest in love stories. Detective stories were popular with boys, but only a small percentage of girls of 15+ read this genre.

In comic reading, each sex had its preferred three comics, with no overlap at all. Older girls moved towards love magazines, boys enjoyed hobby-orientated magazines such as Meccano Magazine and Cyclist. Boys tended to

be more habitual readers of newspapers, though the more serious newspapers were hardly read at all by either sex.

Jenkinson also investigated the reading of poetry and plays, but the evidence here was largely drawn from school texts rather than from leisure-time free-choice reading. The replies seemed to indicate a thin choice of reading material available in the schools.

A short questionnaire administered to teachers also indicated that the choice of texts, as well as the number of books studied, was meagre, and it seemed that teachers were trying to produce adult tastes in the young by offering only the literature of the heritage, the old-established set books of the examinations system. Of course one must bear in mind that at the time of this survey there were relatively few high quality children's books available, but one reason which Jenkinson suggested for teachers continuing to use unsuitable books with their pupils was the lack of research into middle school reading tastes and habits.

Jenkinson argued the case for inferior literature, saying that the policy of giving to school children only the best in literature involves a neglect of their own childish interests, produces bad teaching and unreal learning, and fails to contribute to the development of these interests into grown-up preferences.

He also claimed that 'real improvements in taste are discernible as children grow older, as their experience widens and their contact with reality becomes broader and deeper.' This change comes about with growth, is a developmental change unconnected with, even in spite of, what goes on in the classroom. Enid Blyton's colourless cardboard characters, with their predictable adventures, once filled the reading time of many of us, but fortunately we matured to works which filled not just the time but the imagination, and Enid was left behind, as Fred Inglis neatly describes

her, 'awful but unimportant'.[2]

But we, as librarians and book people, are the exceptions in society at large. How far have teachers come since 1940 in encouraging children to range widely in the excellent books now available? How many teachers are themselves widely read in children's fiction? Perhaps our research should start here, or in the colleges and universities where teachers are trained. More courses on children's literature seem to be needed, with in-service courses and conferences to refresh and stimulate teachers and to bring them up to date with the latest literature. Some improvements to English literature examination syllabuses have been made, however, to include recent fiction and that written especially for children. Also, in many schools there are now junior class libraries, paperback collections and displays of appropriate and attractive fiction.

To give details in this brief paper of all the surveys undertaken during the fifties and sixties would be too time-consuming, and some of them are in any case rather limited in scope. Television and the Child (1958), by Hilde Himmelweit, A. N. Oppenheim and Pamela Vince, is also a limited survey as regards reading interests, for reading was only looked at as an activity which might suffer from the growing influence of television. The findings are now dated, for while in the 1950's by no means every home had a television set, by the eighties television is virtually standard equipment in every home. One present-day influence of television, noted by librarians and teachers, is the request from children for books of programmes seen on television, such as Grange Hill, an interest which publishers have not been slow to exploit. However, this influence of television cannot be all bad, for Ballet Shoes, Heidi and The Railway Children have appeared on our screens and have presumably attracted readers, just as adults have been directed to Trollope and Henry James and Evelyn Waugh.

The most comprehensive research undertaken in Great Britain was that of the Schools Council, under Frank Whitehead, A. C. Capey, Wendy Maddren and Alan Wellings, and published by Macmillan in 1975 as Children and their Books. The research was based at the University of Sheffield's Institute of Education from 1969 to 1975, and it sought to discover 'the extent and kind of children's voluntary reading, what satisfactions they seek from books, and what environmental factors influence their choice'.

In 1971 a national questionnaire survey was conducted with some 8000 children of 10, 12 and 14 years old, in 193 primary and 188 secondary schools. Follow-up interviews were held with 576 children in 34 different schools throughout the country.

The Schools Council research team went very carefully into the question of the sampling technique to be employed, and decided to sample children in three year groups - those aged 10 at the beginning of the school year, those aged 12 and those aged 14. The largest possible total sample was to be 10,000 that is, roughly 3000 in each age group. The sample had to select first the schools and then the children within the schools. The research was intended to compare reading patterns between regions of the country and between different types of school. Both primary and secondary pupils were to be included, as the sample started at 10+, and in Great Britain and Northern Ireland 11+ is the age of transfer to secondary education.

The aim of the research was to categorise children's reading to show how much children read of different kinds and qualities of material, and then to look at the relationship between their reading behaviour and any other aspects of their total experience which might be associated with it. The children's questionnaire was designed to elicit this information, and a questionnaire given to their teachers was intended to give each child's background, his ability, attainment and

attitude to school, and also some information about each school's organisation, curricula, English syllabus and use of books. There were slightly different versions of the questionnaire for the primary and the secondary sectors. As well as this, follow-up interviews were conducted on a small sample of pupils.

One of the problems immediately encountered was the problem of collecting information about reading, which is a habit, a recurrent pattern of behaviour. Should one make a spot-check, collecting data at one fixed time? Should one ask subjects to keep a diary of their reading over a pre-determined period? Should one keep a check on borrowing from school and/or public library over a set period? For the Schools Council research it was decided to ask children to recall which books they had read during the month preceding the filling-in of the questionnaire. Objectives of the inquiry were defined thus:

1. To provide measures of children's reading behaviour in terms of
   (a) the amount of reading done, particularly of books but also of more ephemeral forms of reading matter and
   (b) preferences among different kinds of reading.

2. To show what sources children used for the books they read.

3. To provide information about children's use of non-literary media.

4. To provide an indication of children's attitudes to their schools.

5. To uncover those family and social differences which ... might relate to different levels of engagement with reading.[3]

The month on which the survey was based covered the last week in February and the greater part of March, 1971, a time when one can reasonably expect that children's reading will be neither at its peak, as it might be, say, just after Christmas, or at its lowest ebb as in the summer when sporting and outdoor activities take up the long evenings. From the table it is clear that at all age levels girls read more than boys and that there is a proportionate falling off in reading as the children grow older.

Average number of books read during one month

Age Group	Boys	Girls	Both Sexes
10+	2.68	3.28	2.95
12+	1.99	2.48	2.21
14+	1.78	2.15	1.95
All age groups	2.16	2.66	2.39

Table 12, from Children and their Books, Frank Whitehead et al. Macmillan Education, 1975.

To compare these figures with those of Jenkinson in 1940 it appears that children in 1971 were reading considerably less. Jenkinson's range fell between 3.9 and 6.5 books a month. The Schools Council figures are nearer to those of the Himmelweit survey, Television and the Child, but in such a comparison the differences in sampling procedure cause problems.

The Schools Council researchers then looked at the percentage of children in four different categories of reader, which they designated non-reader, light reader (1-2 books a month), moderate reader (3-4 books a month), and heavy reader (5+ books a month), and their Table 13 shows the figures here.

Type of book reader as percentage of each age group

Type of book reader	10+		12+		14+	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Non-reader	15.8	9.4	33.2	23.3	40.0	32.4
Light (1-2 a month)	39.9	35.9	33.9	33.4	29.4	32.9
Moderate (3-4 a month)	28.0	30.6	21.5	29.1	21.1	21.1
Heavy (5+ a month)	16.3	24.1	11.4	14.3	9.5	13.6
TOTALS	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.0
n	1402	1345	1353	1259	1307	1173

The Schools Council research deals next with the reading of periodicals, and it was found that at all ages girls read more periodicals than boys, and also that there is some decline in periodical reading in the higher age groups, though not so markedly as in the case of book reading. Popular comics in the 10+ age group for both boys and girls were Dandy, Beano, followed for boys by Beezer and Topper and for girls by Bunty and Mandy. With 12+ boys Beano and Dandy are still in front, followed by Shoot, Victor and Goal. Girls put Bunty, Jackie, Mandy and Judy ahead of Beano and Dandy. Jackie, very much a teenage comic, is already being read by over a quarter of the girls. With the 14+ age group, boys are reading football comics, but Beano still appeals to 12.5%, Dandy to 11.0%. Girls are reading teenage comics and some popular women's magazines, and New Musical Express appears with a low 2% rating, for both sexes. These are some hobbies represented, for boys, Angling Times and Motor Cycling News. Surprisingly there is no mention of Horse and Pony, Riding or Pony in the girls' lists, at any age.

Television viewing takes up about two and a half hours on average per evening, but there is a decline in the amount of viewing at 14+. In general, boys watch rather more than girls, but this might reflect the nature of the programmes, with time given to sport, especially mid-week.

Perhaps for our purpose the most interesting aspect of this research is the range and diversity of the books read by children in the three age groups. In the achieved sample of 7839 children, 25.4% had read no book during the previous month; the remaining 74.6% made up a total of 5846 book reading children, by whom 7557 separate book titles were mentioned. These titles ranged from such junior titles as Sam Pig Goes to Market by Alison Uttley to Women in Love by D H Lawrence. Non-fiction was also represented: from Show Jumping by Pat Smythe to The Social Psychology of Industry by J A C Brown.

Classification of such a variety of titles for the purposes of analysis presents problems, for here Dewey is of limited assistance. The Schools Council researchers decided on the following categories, but even within these it was necessary to make some arbitrary judgements. The categories are:

Juvenile narrative
quality
non-quality

Adult narrative
quality
non-quality

Fairy tales, myths and legends

Annuals

non-narrative

Unclassified

The most widely read books in this list were determined by asking children tick against each book they claimed to have read one of the following five statements:

It was one of the best I had ever read
I liked it very much
I quite liked it
I did not like it much
I did not like it at all.

From this evidence the following tables were produced:

Most Widely Read Books in the Top Junior Group (age 10+)

(N=2784)

% Reading		Liking Score (1 to 5) Boys	Girls	Combined
4.5	Black Beauty	4.0	4.0	4.0
2.8	Treasure Island	4.1	2.7	3.7
2.7	The Secret Seven	4.1	3.8	3.9
2.6	Little Women	-	4.0	-
2.2	Alice in Wonderland	-	3.7	-
2.0	The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	3.8	4.2	4.1
1.6	Heidi	-	4.2	-
	Robin Hood	3.9	-	-
1.3	Brer Rabbit	3.6	3.7	3.7
	Tom Sawyer	3.8	3.9	3.8
1.1	Robinson Crusoe	3.9	-	-
	The Three Musketeers	3.9	-	-
1.0	Five on a Treasure Island	-	4.4	-
	Oliver Twist	*	4.1	-
	Swiss Family Robinson	4.1	-	-
0.9	The Borrowers	-	3.2	-
	Five Go Down to the Sea	-	4.2	-
	Five Go Off to Camp	-	4.3	-
	The Wind in the Willows	*	3.4	-
0.8	(Dr Doolittle	*	*	-)
	Five Go Off in a Caravan	-	4.3	-
	Grimm's Fairy Tales	-	4.1	-
	Kidnapped	4.0	-	-
	Mary Poppins	-	3.2	-
	The Secret Island	-	3.9	-
0.7	(A Christmas Carol	-	*	-)
	Five on a Hike Together	-	4.5	-
	Five Run Away Together	-	4.2	-
	Island of Adventure	-	4.2	-
	Snow White	-	3.7	-
	The Silver Sword	-	4.3	-
	What Katy Did	-	3.4	-

-: Read by fewer than 10 boys (first column)

-: Read by fewer than 10 girls (second column)

*: Insufficient ratings to yield meaningful 'liking score'
although read by 10 or more boys (first column)
although read by 10 or more girls (second column)

Most Widely Read Books in Second Year Secondary Group (age 12+)

(N=2664)

% Reading		Liking Score (1 to 5) Boys	Girls	Combined
3.0	Little Women	-	4.0	-
2.6	Black Beauty	3.7	4.1	4.0
2.1	Treasure Island	3.9	3.3	3.8
1.3	The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	-	4.4	-
1.2	Jane Eyre	-	4.0	-
	Heidi	-	3.9	-
	Oliver Twist	3.8	3.9	3.8
1.1	The Secret Seven	*	4.1	-
1.0	The Silver Sword	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Tom Sawyer	-	3.4	-
	What Katy Did	-	3.7	-
	Good Wives	-	3.8	-
	Kidnapped	3.1	-	-
0.8	Journey to the Centre of the Earth	3.8	-	-
0.7	Alice in Wonderland	-	3.9	-
	Little Men	-	3.8	-
	(The Railway Children	-	*	-)
	What Katy Did Next	-	3.9	-
0.6	Great Expectations	-	3.7	-
	(The Hobbit	-	-	-)
	The Naughtiest Girl in the School	-	4.2	-
	Robin Hood	3.8	-	-
	(Robinson Crusoe	*	-	-)
	(The Wind in the Willows	-	-	-)

-: Read by fewer than 10 boys (first column)

-: Read by fewer than 10 girls (second column)

*: Insufficient ratings to yield meaningful 'liking score'
although read by 10 or more boys (first column)
although read by 10 or more girls (second column)

Most Widely Read Books in Fourth Year Secondary Group (age 14+)

(N=2527)

% Reading		Liking Score (1 to 5) Boys	Girls	Combined
1.7	Little Women	-	3.8	-
	Skinhead	4.3	4.1	4.2
1.4	Day of the Triffids	3.8	4.2	4.0
	Jane Eyre	-	3.9	-
1.3	Animal Farm	3.9	3.3	3.5
1.1	Oliver Twist	*	3.6	-
	Lord of the Flies	3.7	3.8	3.7
1.0	Love Story	-	4.0	-
	Nineteen Eight Four	3.8	-	-
0.8	Where Eagles Dare	4.5	-	-
	The Chrysalids	-	4.3	-
0.8	Cider with Rosie	-	3.2	-
	Treasure Island	3.4	-	-
	Hell's Angels	3.6	-	-
	War of the Worlds	4.1	-	-
0.7	(Black Beauty	-	*	-)
	Wuthering Heights	-	3.2	-
	Ten Little Niggers	-	4.5	-
	Town Like Alice	-	4.2	-
0.6	Diary of Ann Frank	-	3.8	-
	(The Pearl	-	-	-)
	(Gold Finger	-	-	-)
0.5	Heidi	-	3.7	-
	The Hobbit	-	4.3	-
	My Family and Other Animals	-	4.2	-
	Pride and Prejudice	-	3.2	-
	(Sherlock Holmes Stories	-	-	-)
	To Sir with Love	-	3.9	-

-: Read by fewer than 10 boys (first column)

-: Read by fewer than 10 girls (second column)

*: Insufficient ratings to yield meaningful 'liking score'
although read by 10 or more boys (first column)
although read by 10 or more girls (second column)

These results are of particular interest to librarians, and provide food for thought. The fact that the perennially popular Little Women ranks alongside the sex-and-violence of Skinhead is curious, Black Beauty retains its popularity across the age spectrum, as does Treasure Island, though here the older girls have rejected it, perhaps in favour of Love Story or Wuthering Heights.

In the forerunner of this large-scale investigation, the Schools Council Working Paper 52, Children's Reading Interests, a suggestion was made that a longtitudinal study of a much smaller number of children should be made, in order to follow through their reading over a period of several years and thereby establish the specific determining influences, whether in home, neighbourhood or school, that affect changes in children's reading habits and tastes. Merril Brown conducted such a study between 1975 and 1978, with a sample of 40 children, and concluded that her findings were not very different from those of the national survey. Her conclusion is of interest to librarians, and may even be salutary:

> 'The survey showed that the diversity of tastes and interests, and the range of ability, in this small sample, was immense. Most children (and there are few exceptions) have the will to read, and whatever their ability or stage of development, all children need guidance and encouragement from interested adults if they are to develop their reading ability and their reading interests'.[4]

My own research was an investigation, along the lines of the Schools Council's study, of 478 Northern Ireland children, in the first three years of secondary schooling, that is, between eleven and thirteen. The pupils were drawn from both types of secondary school, and from urban and rural environments.

The sample was distributed thus:

Age	Boys	Girls	Totals
11+	80	78	158
12+	85	69	154
13+	76	90	166
Totals	241	237	478

Pupils were given a questionnaire based closely on the Schools Council format, to be completed on a day in January. The accompanying letter asked that the questionnaire should not be given on a Monday, as the preceding weekend might present a disproportionate amount of television viewing. Pupils were asked to recall those books (if any) which they had read in the past four weeks, and the following table was produced:

Average number of books read during the last month

Age	Boys	Girls	Average
11+	3.187	4.641	3.905
12+	3.565	3.536	3.552
13+	2.382	2.622	2.512
	3.066	3.553	3.3075

In the youngest category there is a 5% level of significance between boys and girls, girls reading more books per month than do boys, but there is no significant difference in the amount of reading between boys and girls at 12+ or at 13+. The age difference shows a progressive increase in non-readers and a corresponding falling off of heavy readers in both sexes. Factors here may be the increasing demands of school work, with longer homework time, the increase in extra-curricular activities, both school-based and in youth clubs, the widening interests of adolescence, and the growing independence which takes young people out of the home away from books.

Also investigated was the number of comics and magazines read regularly. Here boys in all age groups read more comics than do girls, but the average number of comics and magazines combined showed girls ahead at 11+ and 13+, but boys slightly in the lead at 12+. A breakdown by age and sex in the number of magazines, including comics, read, showed a sex difference at the 1% level at 11+, at the 5% level at 13+, and no significant difference at 12+.

Distribution of children regularly reading magazines (%)

Number of magazines (includes comics)	Youngest		Middle		Oldest	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
0	13.7	9.0	18.8	15.9	17.1	7.8
1-3	43.7	25.6	36.5	40.6	38.2	25.6
4-6	33.7	39.7	25.9	29.0	27.6	38.9
7+	8.7	25.6	18.8	14.5	17.1	27.8
Totals	99.8	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1
n	80	78	85	69	76	90

On the question of how much reading children actually do, the following table shows the type of book reader as a percentage of each age group:

	Youngest		Middle		Oldest	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Only a little	3.7	1.3	14.1	7.2	10.5	10.0
Not very much	10.0	5.1	18.8	10.1	22.4	14.4
About average	50.0	25.6	36.5	33.3	48.7	35.6
Quite a lot	21.2	43.6	10.6	29.0	11.8	27.8
A large amount	15.0	24.4	20.0	20.3	6.6	12.2
Totals	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	80	78	85	69	76	90

The chi square analysis showed a difference at the 1% level in the youngest age group, and at the 5% level in the other two groups. Girls are shown as giving more time to reading than do boys.

An analysis of the types of reader, following the Schools Council categorisation, produced the following table.

Type of book reader	Youngest		Middle		Oldest	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Non-reader	12.5	3.8	18.8	10.1	21.1	25.6
Light (1-2 a month)	33.7	20.5	21.2	26.1	39.5	28.9
Moderate (3-4 a month)	28.7	33.3	25.9	37.7	23.7	26.7
Heavy (5+ a month)	25.0	42.3	34.1	26.1	15.8	18.9
Totals	99.9	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.1
n	80	78	85	69	76	90

The type of fiction read by the three age groups was broken down into:-

Children's non-quality
Children's quality
Adult non-quality
Adult quality
Non-fiction

Problems were of course encountered in the classification of some of the titles mentioned, so some errors have inevitably crept in, but so few as not to distort the results significantly. The following table shows the breakdown by age and sex:

Categories of book reading as % of all book reading for each age-and-sex grouping

Book category	Youngest		Middle		Oldest	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
C.N.Q.	44.853	57.922	31.475	44.009	25.639	32.445
C.Q.	18.569	28.243	15.076	37.187	7.321	31.663
A.N.Q.	18.893	2.448	13.899	5.963	41.020	20.089
A.Q.	2.837	2.724	4.905	3.493	4.250	11.955
N.F.	14.848	8.664	34.646	9.348	21.770	3.849

Named favourite authors were ranked, and as with the earlier research, Enid Blyton still comes high on the list, while one looks in vain for Rosemary Sutcliff, Alan Garner, Catherine Storr, Rutgers van der Loeff and many more.

Named Favourite Authors (% of total)

(overall and split up by age and sex)

Named Author	Overall	Age Group			Sex	
		Youngest	Middle	Oldest	Male	Female
C. S. Lewis	4.4	0.6	3.6	0.2	1.9	2.5
Enid Blyton	14.0	6.3	2.3	5.4	4.0	10.0
Roald Dahl	0.2	0.2	-	-	-	0.2
Beverley Clearly	0.2	-	0.2	-	-	0.2
L. M. Alcott	0.6	-	0.4	0.2	-	0.6
L. M. Montgomery	-	-	-	-	-	-
Walter Macken	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jack London	0.2	-	0.2	-	0.2	-
R. L. Stevenson	1.9	1.7	-	0.2	1.3	0.6
Joan Lingard	4.8	0.2	1.3	3.3	1.0	3.8
Leon Garfield	0.2	0.2	-	-	-	0.2
Alfred Hitchcock	10.9	4.8	4.2	1.9	7.9	2.9
Agatha Christie	3.6	0.4	0.8	2.3	1.3	2.3
Eve Garnett	0.2	-	0.2	-	-	0.2
E. Nesbitt	0.4	0.2	-	0.2	-	0.4
Ian Fleming	0.6	0.2	-	0.4	0.4	0.2
J. R. Tolkien	0.8	0.4	-	0.4	0.8	-
Richard Adams	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.2
Noel Streatfeild	2.5	0.6	1.3	0.6	-	2.5
Others	25.9	9.6	7.9	8.4	13.4	12.6

Main Categories of 'others' Favourite Authors

Carolyn Keene	4.6	3.6	0.2	0.8	-	4.6
Franklin Dixon	1.7	0.8	-	0.8	1.7	-
Willard Price	1.7	0.2	0.8	0.6	1.5	0.2
James Herriot	1.7	0.2	0.4	1.0	0.8	0.8
Alistair MacLean	1.0	0.2	0.2	0.6	1.0	-
Charles Dickens	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.4
Michael Hardcastle	0.6	0.4	-	0.2	0.6	-
Catherine Cookson	0.4	-	-	0.4	-	0.4
Jules Verne	0.4	-	0.4	-	0.4	-
Spike Milligan	0.4	-	0.4	-	0.4	-

The ranking of favourite authors is also depressing, with very little quality fiction, children's or adult, featuring in the lists. The popularity of Joan Lingard is accounted for by the fact that she writes about the problems of Belfast, and her books are often included among class readers as well as featuring prominently in both school and public ilbraries.

Ranking of Favourite Authors

OVERALL

		(%)
1.	Enid Blyton	(14.0)
2.	Alfred Hitchcock	(10.9)
3.	Joan Lingard	(4.8)
4.	Carolyn Keene (N.C.)	(4.6)
5.	C. S. Lewis	(4.4)
6.	Agatha Christie	(3.6)
7.	N. Streatfeild	(2.5)
8.	R. L. Stevenson	(1.9)
9.	Franklin Dixon (N.C.)	(1.7)
	Willard Price (N.C.)	(1.7)
	James Herriot (N.C.)	(1.7)
10.	Alistair MacLean (N.C.)	(1.0)
11.	J. R. Tolkien	(0.8)
	Charles Dickens (N.C.)	(0.8)
12.	L. M. Alcott	(0.6)
	Ian Fleming	(0.6)
	Richard Adams	(0.6)
	Michael Hardcastle (N.C.)	(0.6)
13.	E. Nesbitt	(0.4)
	C. Cookson (N.C.)	(0.4)
	Jules Verne (N.C.)	(0.4)
	Spike Milligan (N.C.)	(0.4)

Ranking of Favourite Authors (Contd.)

	Boys	(%)		Girls	(%)
1.	Alfred Hitchcock	(7.9)	1.	Enid Blyton	(10.0)
2.	Enid Blyton	(4.0)	2.	Carolyn Keene (N.C.)	(4.6)
3.	C. S. Lewis	(1.9)	3.	Joan Lingard	(3.8)
4.	Franklin Dixon (N.C.)	(1.7)	4.	Alfred Hitchcock	(2.9)
5.	Willard Price (N.C.)	(1.5)	5.	C. S. Lewis	(2.5)
6.	R. L. Stevenson	(1.3)		Noel Streatfeild	(2.5)
	Agatha Christie	(1.3)	6.	Agatha Christie	(2.3)
7.	Joan Lingard	(1.0)	7.	James Herriot (N.C.)	(0.8)
	Alistair MacLean (N.C.)	(1.0)	8.	L. M. Alcott	(0.6)
8.	J. R. Tolkien	(0.8)		R. L. Stevenson	(0.6)
	James Herriot (N.C.)	(0.8)	9.	E. Nesbitt	(0.4)
9.	Michael Hardcastle (N.C.)	(0.6)		Charles Dickens (N.C.)	(0.4)
10.	Ian Fleming	(0.4)		C. Cookson (N.C.)	(0.4)
	Richard Adams	(0.4)			
	Charles Dickens (N.C.)	(0.4)			
	Jules Verne (N.C.)	(0.4)			
	Spike Milligan	(0.4)			

The pupils were also asked what advice they would give to an author writing for their age group, and their replies, in order of priority, were excitement, adventure, reality, mystery and humour. Violence came far down the scale and historical fiction had a very low rating, mentioned by only 1.5% of the total sample.

So these questions remain. Do Enid Blyton, Alfred Hitchcock and Carolyn Keene supply a need in the adolescent for excitement and adventure, where Alan Garner, Leon Garfield and William Mayne have failed? Or are the young people unaware of the range of quality fiction available to them? Do parents know which books to buy for their children, do aunts and uncles plump for yet another Enid Blyton at Christmas and for birthdays? And, for us the most significant question, do librarians, in schools and in public libraries, seize every opportunity to help readers to select wisely, and play their part in forming taste and discernment in our young people? There are those who argue that to read something, however meretricious, is better than not reading at all: after all, Matthew Arnold thought that a man who read nothing but his daily newspaper had acquired some modicum of culture. Others would stock only quality literature, and so run the risk of attracting only an <u>elite</u> readership. So does IASL have a policy on this issue?

In this paper I have tried to focus on not just the statistics of children's readings, but on the significance of these figures in terms of the vast potential for enrichment, self-development and self-fulfilment afforded by 'the best which has been thought and said in the world', by the true culture of great literature. The message is clear: there is still much to be done, by parents, by teachers and by librarians.

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